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Milton Berliner

Michael Winner, who spent several weeks scouting locations here for his latest film, "Scorpio," pronounced Washington the "most beautiful city in America." He dismissed San Francisco, which usually gets the nod, with a wave of the hand.

"If you love trees, and I love trees, this is the place," he said, looking out of the picture window of his huge Watergate Hotel suite at Virginia shore greenery across the Potomac.

He said that half of "Scorpio," an international spy movie, is set in Washington (a 10-day shooting schedule began last Saturday) and the other half in London, Vienna and Paris. Burt Lancaster, Paul Scofield, Alain Delon are in it as well as John Colicos and Gayle Hunnicutt. All except Delon will be working here.

"The film," he said, "will show the Washington that's lived in, not just what the tourists see. We'll be shooting here in 10 or 12 residential areas from rich to poor, a couple of supermarkets, a tremendous skating rink, a cemetery and at some monuments, but I'm not concentrating on them. Also a gymnasium in a black area, Union Station, the Greyhound bus station and Oost in Georgetown. I am amazed that the Georgetown area has not been used to any extent in movies. It's quite marvelous. We have a scene in which someone is killed there."

Winner said that he has had an office here for 16 weeks rounding up all the necessary permits.

"I've been very struck," he said, "with how helpful not only the police have been but all government authorities as well."

"I spent yesterday (Thursday) seeing a lot of people. We expect to use 300 or 400 in the film. One or two are kind of semi-local actors who will have lines."

Only problem so far, he said, was getting enough planes for scenes at National and Dulles airports (after Transp '72).

"There aren't too many planes available during the daytime but that's been worked out," Winner said.

A few of the Washington interiors in "Scorpio" will actually be done in London, the major one being the recreation of the Central Intelligence Agency headquarters in Langley, Va.

"We've taken an enormous building in the Greenbelt area

just outside London," Winner said. "It matches the CIA better than any building we found in Washington. We will also be shooting a Washington scene in a modern London apartment house. I regret to say those buildings are the same the world over."

Winner, who will discuss his film "The Joker" after a showing at the American Film Institute Theater next Sunday evening, said he was a little surprised at the excellent box office response in this country to "Chatow's Land" which he also directed.

"We knew it would do well abroad because Charlie Bronson is an enormous star there," he said. "But in Washington where it opened first (at RKO Keith's) it did terrifically well. It says 'A Michael Winner film' but I know I'm not a draw nor is co-star Jack Palance so it must be Bronson."

"The funny thing here is that this was Charlie Bronson's first picture all made in English, and he has only 10 lines in it. And all except seven words are in Apache. All he says in English is: 'Stand back, lawman' and 'The Mexican is good.'"

"In England and Europe 'Chatow' got an X rating, but here they wanted a PG so we took a hell of a lot out of it. For example, where Chatow's wife is raped we originally shot her naked and she was naked when tied to the stake. Of course, an X in England doesn't carry the pornographic stigma it does here. An X film in England is frequently one of some intelligence but a bit strong. In England, you can be refused even an X, shown at all."

Michael Winner

Winner has another Bronson film coming out after Christmas — "The Mechanic." It's about the Mafia as is a film Bronson has just completed in Rome, "The Valachi Papers."

"The Mafia seems to be in these days," Winner said. "But I think 'The Mechanic' is different because you never see the whole family. It's Mafia, all right, but it deals with only one employee who trains himself to a pitch to be the very best killer in the business. But as the film begins he has trained himself to such a point that he is beginning to crack up but continues to take assignments."

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